# Turning Green Wood

In this course I often take students to the wood dump and you may want to use the "Green" or wet wood from the dump for turning on the lathe. If so, you need to know about how turning green wood is different from turning the dry wood that we sell in the shop.

## Avoid Cracks - Keep Your Wood In A Plastic Bag

In order to prevent your turning from cracking, you should turn your wood while it is wet and keep your wood wet until all turning is completed. When you're done turning, the bulk of the turning blank will be reduced in size and the chances of cracking will be lessened. This means you should turn your wood immediately, if possible, and do all the work in one session. But this is not always possible, and in these cases you should store your wood in a plastic bag to keep it wet until the work is completed. If you need several sessions to complete the work, store the work in a plastic bag between sessions.

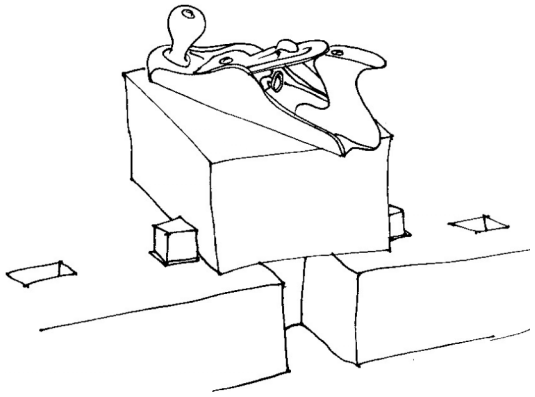
**Please do not store your work in a plastic bag with the faceplate on!** If you do this, the faceplate will rust from the moisture, **and** you will take the faceplate out of circulation, which means that no one else will be able to use that faceplate.

If you store your green wood in a plastic bag for more than several days, it may go moldy. This will just be surface mold and should not be difficult to remove.

## Eleven Pointers About Mounting Green Wood On The Lathe

1. For faceplate turning, you should not use the method described in your handouts and in the class demo for gluing on a plywood disc and screwing your faceplate into the plywood because white glue does not stick very well to wet wood. Instead, your turning block must be larger than your final turning so that you can screw the faceplate directly into the green wood.

2. The face of the block onto which you screw your faceplate must be very flat. You might be able to use the sander for this, but I recommend using a hand plane. You might need help to set up the plane properly. The hand plane shaves the block nice and flat. To test the end of your block for flatness, hold a faceplate against it and see if you can get it to rock back and forth. If it rocks back and forth then it's not flat.



3. A green wood turning block will be very heavy, because it is wet, and the attachment must be very strong. The small three-inch faceplates have only three holes for screws and therefore cannot hold a lot of weight, so

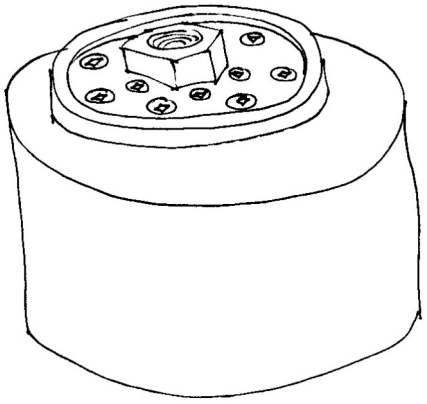
use these small faceplates for small turnings only. The six-inch faceplates hold with much more strength because they have many more screw holes.

4. Screws hold better into side grain than they do into end grain. If you are screwing a faceplate to your work into engrain, you might want to increase the holding strength by using longer screws.

5. Screws may not hold very well in wood that is decayed or partially decayed.

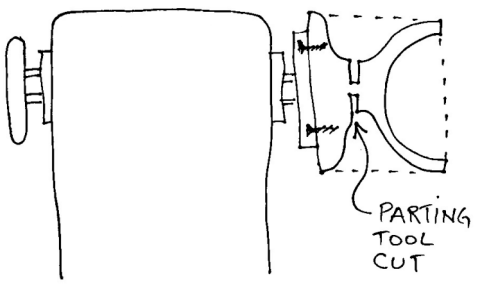
6. Do not drill pilot holes in your green wood for faceplate screws. Just screw them right into the wet wood.

7. Cut your block round before mounting the work on the lathe. The best way to cut the block round is to flip the block good-face-down and draw a circle on the upper not-good face. Have the good-face down on the small band saw to cut the circle. You want the good-face down because you want the walls of the cylinder to be square to the face that the faceplate mounts on. The bandsaw cuts work square to the face of the block that sits down on the bandsaw table. Make sense?



8. Before you mount your work on the lathe, be sure that the lathe has been set to the lowest speed. Remember that the lathe must be running while you adjust the speed.

9. When you mount your work to begin faceplate turning, you should bring up the tailstock and use this end support. This is very important because at the beginning of your turning the irregularity of your block can easily tear the wood free from the screws holding it to the faceplate. This is not good. Help those screws by using the tailstock whenever possible. Take the tailstock away once the exterior is complete and you are ready to turn the interior.

10. When making a bowl from green dump wood, try to make all the walls, including the base, an even thickness, and not too thick. One half to a full inch may be fine.

11. When the turning is finished, the bowl can be cut from the base of the block using a special technique and a tool called a parting tool. You should ask me (or Joel) to show you how to do this. The bowl can also be cut from the base block with the bandsaw but you should also ask me (or Joel) how to do this because a round block is very tricky and dangerous to cut on the bandsaw.